

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 038949

P 270454Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4681

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY

USMISSION IAEA VIENNA PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 9929

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MNUC PARM KS FR

SUBJECT: ROK NUCLEAR REPROCESSING

REF: A. STATE 203043 B. STATE 299089 C. STATE 289610
D. STATE 226011 E. SEOUL 9928

FOLLOWING IS FULLER ACCOUNT OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN AMBASSADOR
AND PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARY KIM CHONG-YOM ON DECEMBER 26 ON
ROK NUCLEAR REPROCESSING.

1. AMBASSADOR OPENED MEETING WITH PRESENTATION US POSITION.
HE INITIALLY POINTED OUT USG OBJECTIVE REMAINS TO ENHANCE
US-KOREAN COOPERATION BY REMOVING MAJOR OBSTACLE, NAMELY
ROKGS DECISION TO PURCHASE FROM FRANCE NUCLEAR REPROCESSING
FACILITY. TWO BASIC CONSIDERATIONS LED TO USG DECISION: FIRST,
OVERRIDING POLITICAL AND SECURITY CONCERNS; SECOND, TECHNICAL
CONSIDERATIONS. AMBASSADOR HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO ADDRESS
POLITICAL AND SECURITY ASPECTS IN MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PARK
AND WOULD WISH TO DO SO IN ABSENCE OF AGREEMENT.

2. AMBASSADOR THEN REVIEWED ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL ASPECTS,
DRAWING FROM REF C, POINTING OUT REPROCESSING ON NATIONAL
BASIS MADE VIRTUALLY NO SENSE ON TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC GROUNDS.

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THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY LENGTHIER REVIEW OF POLITICAL AND SECURITY

CONSIDERATIONS, INCLUDING REFERENCE TO ARGUMENTS MADE BY FORMER PRIME MINISTER AGAINST NUCLEAR WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT (SEOUL 9402 AND SEOUL 9440). HE POINTED OUT LACK OF ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION FOR NATIONAL REPROCESSING IN KOREA WOULD ONLY HEIGHTEN CONCERN THAT AIM OF REPROCESSING IS TO EXTRACT PLUTONIUM FOR WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT DESPITE SAFEGUARDS, GREAT SENSITIVITY OF KOREAN AREA, US CONCERN GLOBALLY WITH RESPECT TO REPROCESSING AS PATH TO PROLIFERATION, AND PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS SUCH AS CONGRESSIONAL REACTION WHICH WOULD AFFECT OTHER KOREAN PROGRAMS BEFORE CONGRESS. HE SUMMED UP CONCLUDING ROKG DECISION TO GO AHEAD WITH FRENCH CONTRACT ON REPROCESSING WOULD THEREFORE INEVITABLY AFFECT OUR BROADER RELATIONSHIP.

3. AMBASSADOR THEN DETAILED POSITIVE ADVANTAGES IN TERMS NUCLEAR COOPERATION FLOWING FROM DECISION TO CANCEL CONTRACT, DRAWING FROM REFS A AND B. THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY REITERATION OF COMMENTS ON VICE MINISTER YI'S PAPER (SEOUL 9662 AND 9663). AMBASSADOR SUMMED UP, DRAWING PRECISELY FROM PARA 3 REF A. NO FURTHER REFERENCE WAS MADE TO US SUPPORT FOR REPROCESSING TRAINING AND SERVICES AND QUESTION WAS NOT RAISED SPECIFICALLY BY KIM, SO THAT CONTINGENCY INSTRUCTION PARA 4 REF A WAS NOT USED. AMBASSADOR CONCLUDED BY STATING THAT SUCH COOPERATION INCLUDING LOAN FOR KORI II NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT CANCELLATION. HE URGED IN INTEREST OF BOTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM AND BROADER RELATIONSHIPS THAT ROKG CANCEL FRENCH CONTRACT.

4. KIM THEN REVIEWED BASIC ELEMENTS OF ROK POSITION. HIS PRESENTATION COVERED:

A. ROKG OBJECTIVE LIMITED TO PEACEFUL USE OF NUCLEAR ENERGY;

B. ROKG DEPENDENT UPON NUCLEAR ENERGY FOR FUTURE REQUIREMENTS GIVEN LIMITATIONS OF OTHER ENERGY SOURCES;

C. ROKG PROGRAM ENVISAGES BY YEAR 2000 TWENTY-FIVE NUCLEAR PLANTS AT COST OF \$32 BILLION AT CURRENT PRICES AND \$10 BILLION FOR FUEL.

D. TO LESSEN FOREIGN EXCHANGE COSTS, ROKG WISHES DEVELOP CAPABILITY FOR DESIGN AND FABRICATION OF NUCLEAR PLANTS AND FUEL
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ELEMENTS.

E. ONLY ROKG OBJECTIVE IS TO LESSEN BALANCE OF PAYMENTS PRESSURE AND ITS FIRM INTENTION IS NOT TO PROCESS, IMPORT, OR DEVELOP NUCLEAR WEAPONS.

5. KIM THEN REVIEWED FAMILIAR HISTORY OF KOREAN EFFORTS TO APPROACH US ON REPROCESSING AND OTHER NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY,

FAILURE OF THESE EFFORTS, AND THEN AS LAST RESORT, NEGOTIATIONS WITH FRENCH. HE POINTED TO TRIPARTITE SAFEGUARD ELEMENTS NEGOTIATED WITH IAEA AND FRANCE, RATIFICATION OF NPT, AND OTHER ACTIONS DESIGNED TO ASSURE ROKG PEACEFUL INTENTIONS. SINCE FRENCH CONTRACT SIGNED, DOWN PAYMENT AND INTEREST PAYMENTS ALREADY MADE, IT VERY DIFFICULT FOR ROKG TO CANCEL OR WITHHOLD CONTRACT.

6. AT THIS POINT KIM STATED THAT NOTWITHSTANDING ABOVE, ROKG PREPARED TO RECONSIDER REPROCESSING ASPECT OF FRENCH CONTRACT, GIVEN US OBJECTIONS, BROAD CONSIDERATIONS OF US-KOREAN RELATIONS AND SERIOUSNESS OF US REQUEST ON POLITICAL AND SECURITY GROUNDS. PROPOSAL SET FORTH REF E THEN MADE BY KIM. IN ENSUING CONVERSATION AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT ONLY MAJOR DIFFERENCE IN USG AND ROK POSITIONS RE NUCLEAR ENERGY PROGRAM WAS IN AREA OF NUCLEAR REPROCESSING WHERE US HAD OVERRIDING POLITICAL OBJECTIONS AND QUESTIONED FOREIGN EXCHANGE SAVINGS, POINTING TO CALCULATIONS IN REF C.

7. MOST OF REMAINING CONVERSATION WAS EFFORT BY AMBASSADOR TO ELICIT MORE SPECIFIC DETAILS ON ROK PROPOSAL, RESULTS OF WHICH REPORTED IN REF E. AT SEVERAL POINTS KIM REVERTED TO CONFIDENCE THAT MUTUAL SATISFACTORY AGREEMENT ON SCOPE OF NON-SENSITIVE NUCLEAR COOPERATION COULD BE REACHED. HOWEVER, HE STATED THAT, GIVEN FOREIGN EXCHANGE COSTS OF FUEL CYCLE, ROKG NOT PREPARED GIVE UP FRENCH OPTION WITHOUT FULLER DETAILS OF US PROPOSAL IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS RAISED BY VICE MINISTER YI.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4682

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AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY

USMISSION IAEA VIENNA PRIORITY

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EXDIS

8. AMBASSADOR PRESSED HARD FOR REASONING BEHIND ROKG UNWILLINGNESS TO CANCEL FRENCH CONTRACT NOW BEFORE PROCEEDING WITH DISCUSSIONS, AS REQUESTED BY USG. KIM RESPONDED THAT IT CURRENT STAGE OF CONTRACT, PAYMENTS OF INTEREST ALREADY PAID, IT WOULD NOT BENEFIT SOVEREIGN GOVERNMENT TO CANCEL REPROCESSING ASPECT OF CONTRACT WITHOUT JUSTIFICATION, E.G. AGREEMENT WITH US ON NUCLEAR COOPERATION. HE ALSO SAID ROKG WAS NOT PREPARED TO FORMALLY NOTIFY FRENCH ON WITHHOLDING OF CONTRACT CONCLUSION, BUT THIS DECISION WAS SUBSEQUENTLY REVERSED BY PRESIDENT PARK LATER IN DAY.

9. AT CONCLUSION OF CONVERSATION AMBASSADOR NOTED KEY DIFFERENCE IN POSITIONS TWO COUNTRIES WAS ROKG REFUSAL TO CANCEL FRENCH CONTRACT UNTIL DISCUSSIONS WITH US ON SCOPE OF NUCLEAR COOPERATION REACHED SATISFACTORY AGREEMENT. HE REITERATED USG POSITION ON POLITICAL AND SECURITY GROUNDS. KIM SAID THAT HE WOULD GIVE FULL REPORT TO PRESIDENT PARK, BUT URGED ACCEPTANCE KOREAN POSITION IN FULL CONFIDENCE AGREEMENT COULD BE REACHED THROUGH DETAILED DISCUSSIONS BY EXPERTS.
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